

Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

courage is contagious

Viewing cable 06BEIRUT2513, TFLE01: MP BOUTROS HARB: NASRALLAH CANNOT BECOME

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06BEIRUT2513**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06BEIRUT2513	2006-08-01 16:10	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Beirut

Appears in these articles:

[not](#)
[yet](#)
[set](#)

VZCZCXRO7273
PP RUEHAG RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK
DE RUEHLB #2513/01 2131610
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 011610Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4857
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 002513

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/SINGH/HARDING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/31/2016
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [IS](#) [LE](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: TFLE01: MP BOUTROS HARB: NASRALLAH CANNOT BECOME
REGION'S RAMBO

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On August 1, Ambassador and Emboff met with MP Boutros Harb at his home in Beirut. Harb insisted that Hizballah must be prevented from emerging from the conflict in a position of power, as this would spell tragedy for Lebanon and the region. Yet he warned that as Hizballah continues to challenge Israel and gain international sympathy, the group will appear as heroes in the region. He rejected a strike on Syria but recommended that a strong Israeli offensive to completely control the Hizballah strongholds of Maroun El Ras and Bint Jbeil may provide a chance for the U.S. to impose a cease-fire while showing Hizballah as overpowered. He supports PM Sinora's call for the return of Shebaa Farms and called Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri a political victim of Hizballah. He acknowledged that Iran holds the key to resolving the Hizballah issue but noted that Syria will not be part of the solution. END SUMMARY

HIZBALLAH CANNOT EMERGE AS HERO

¶2. (C) MP Boutros Harb, a Maronite Christian member of the March 14 coalition and self-declared presidential candidate, described Israel's offensive on Lebanon as casualty-ridden but with no achievements. His expectation was that Israel would rapidly succeed in the conflict with Hizballah and a cease-fire would emerge. That has not happened and there is concern that Hassan Nasrallah and Hizballah would emerge as heroes from the conflict because they are breaking the "legend of the Israeli army" and winning international sympathy.

¶3. (C) Harb said he has not seen serious steps of a real invasion from Israel. He noted that Arabs are not accustomed to conflicts with Israel lasting more than six days. As the conflict enters its twentieth day, Hizballah is apparently succeeding in the face of Israel. This may give an impression to the Arab world that Israel is vulnerable and can be destroyed with an Arab offensive.

¶4. (C) He described the Arab world as a dichotomy comprising people who accept the existence of an Israeli state and those who will never accept its existence. The pendulum is shifting towards the latter and may result in a "new region" in which Israel's existence is not secure. Ambassador described this as dangerous thinking that will not be helpful for Lebanon. Harb quickly directed his comments to the broader region by stating that if Israel cannot weaken Hizballah, then how will Israel face Hamas and future anti-Israeli regimes that will inevitably emerge.

¶5. (C) Harb warned that sympathy for Hizballah is gaining, particularly in the wake of the attack on Qana, and this is contributing to Hizballah's "hero" image. This sentiment is fueled by the reality that Lebanese who believe that Hizballah does not care about protecting human life cannot express themselves, as they will be seen as opposing the resistance to the Israeli enemy. While regretting that Hizballah does not appear to be seriously weakened, Harb cautioned that a cease-fire is needed to avoid Nasrallah becoming the "Rambo of the region."

STRONGER HIZBALLAH A DISASTER

¶6. (C) Harb, in spite of his criticism of Israel, predicted disaster for Lebanon and the region if Hizballah emerges stronger from this conflict. He stressed that among his Maronite community there is no favor for Hizballah gaining strength in Lebanon. Although Harb is "with them" in opposing the Israeli invasion, he is equally "against them" in their gaining strength in Lebanon. He stated that a strengthened Hizballah would impose its Islamic Sharia ideology on Lebanon, and the Arab world, and spark an already

brewing confrontation between Shi,a and Sunni Muslims.

¶7. (C) Harb counseled that violence between Shi,a and Sunni Muslims is fermenting. Internally displaced Shi,a, who may be armed, have "occupied" Beirut in search of refuge. They are coming with arrogance and carrying the Hizballah flags. They are refusing the humanitarian aid of the Sunni-based Hariri Foundation. Harb thinks that if the conflict is not resolved quickly the Shi,a will spread throughout the country and incidents similar to the July 31 attack on United

BEIRUT 00002513 002 OF 002

Nations House in Beirut will increase. He stressed that the attack on the UN building was a message from Hizballah,s supporters that, "we are at the gates of Solidere" (Beirut,s downtown area that was rehabilitated by assassinated PM Rafik Hariri). Non-Hizballah areas are under threat from people who are injured and anxious to react. A stronger Hizballah will provoke and support this violent reaction.

SUGGESTED STRATEGY

¶8. (C) Harb offered some suggestions. He stressed that what is needed is an exit from the conflict that does not allow Hizballah to emerge as victors (something even Harb admitted was easier said than done). He acknowledged that Hizballah cannot be defeated because it has no headquarters or concentrated group that can be targeted. Harb hopes that Hizballah can be wekaend militarily, although he agreed that any military loss for Hizballah would be offset by its social popularity. He recommended that a strong Israeli advance that completely controls the Hizballah strongholds of Maroun El Ras and Bint Jbeil would provide a chance for the U.S. impose a ceasefire while showing that Hizballah has been overpowered.

¶9. (C) Harb supports Prime Minister Sinora,s call for the Shebaa farms to be returned to Lebanon. He believes that if Shebaa farms were given over to Lebanon, the raison d,etre of Hizballah,s arms would be greatly diminished insofar as occupied "Lebanese" territory would be liberated.

¶10. (C) Harb does not see any wisdom in an Israeli invasion of Syria. He believes that an attack on Syria would improve Syria's blemished image in the Arab world. In addition, Israel has revealed that it is not capable of maintaining a large-scale offensive. It may however, be useful for Israel to threaten an invasion of Syria without actually carrying it out.

ENFORCING AN AGREEMENT

¶11. (C) Harb did not speak confidently when probed about the GOL,s ability to enforce the conditions of a cease-fire agreement. He agreed that Hizballah can no longer be allowed to drag Lebanon into war and that Hassan Nasrallah must be marginalized. However, he stressed that this cannot be done before a cease-fire is reached and possibly beyond. Amidst the death and destruction that is currently taking place in Lebanon at the hands of Israel, the GOL is in no position to challenge Hizballah. This is particularly true after the attack on Qana and while Shi,a refugees, who could instigate violence in non-Hizballah areas, are present in all parts of the country where anti-Hizballah politicians might raise their voices. He added that the key to an agreement with Hizballah rests in Iranian hands. But, Harb continued, Iran will not be part of the solution. He also stressed that Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, a reluctant Hizballah ally, will become the political victim of Hizballah.

¶12. (C) Nonetheless, Harb is hopeful that firm commitments from the international community and Israel on Shebaa farms and guarantees of no future invasions of Lebanon will help strengthen the GOL,s position when confronting Hizballah.

COMMENT

¶13. (C) Harb occupies the same awkward, contradictory position as many of our Christian, Sunni, and Druse contacts: they deplore what they see as the excesses of the Israeli offensive, while hoping Israel succeeds in weakening Hizballah. They long for Israel to have "smart" targetting, yet they have no suggestions on what might really damage Hizballah. Now fearing that Israel will fail (or that the cost of winning will be too high for Lebanon), they are starting to position themselves for a Lebanon they never desired -- one in which Hizballah emerges, merely by virtue of survival, as an even more powerful player in an exhausted country.

FELTMAN